



# Congressman Tim Bishop

*FIRST DISTRICT -- NEW YORK*

## NEWS RELEASE

*NOVEMBER 16, 2005*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **BISHOP: SENIORS NEED MORE TIME TO WADE THROUGH CONFUSING MEDICARE DRUG PLAN**

*Congressman, Colleagues Unite in Effort to Extend Enrollment Deadline by Six Months*

**WASHINGTON, DC** - Congressman Tim Bishop announced today that he has cosponsored legislation giving Medicare beneficiaries more time to figure out the new Medicare prescription drug program, which will go into effect January 2006.

Bishop cosponsored the Medicare Informed Choice Act, which will provide seniors and individuals with disabilities an additional six months to choose from the dozens of plans offered by various companies.

"Senior citizens have a difficult choice ahead of them and they shouldn't be forced to rush," Bishop stated. "They need more time to consult with their doctors and pharmacists to prevent losing precious benefits. My office is fielding hundreds of calls from seniors who are confused and angry about this plan. Ideology is coming face-to-face with reality."

According to a Kaiser Family Foundation poll, 60 percent of seniors said they didn't understand the new drug program "too well" or "not well at all," according to the health care think tank, yet the Republican leadership has refused to listen to the concerns of seniors and people with disabilities. The Administration sent incorrect information to beneficiaries, and now the Department of Health and Human Services is telling seniors to find answers online, even though a recent Pew Internet and American Life Project survey found that approximately 75% of seniors don't use the Internet.

Under the Medicare prescription drug law signed into law in 2003, beneficiaries are eligible to purchase the new Medicare Part D drug benefit through a private drug plan or enroll in a Medicare managed care plan that offers a drug benefit. The enrollment period begins November 15, 2005 and ends on May 15, 2006.

In addition to expanding the existing six-month open enrollment period to the entire year of 2006, the Medicare Informed Choice Act would give every beneficiary the opportunity to make a one-time change in plan enrollment at any point in 2006. Without these changes, beneficiaries will face a late-enrollment penalty if they enroll in a plan after May 15, 2006, could lose employer-provided retiree health benefits if they enroll in some Part D plans, and could be prohibited from switching plans until 2007.

Bishop has been fighting for real alternatives to reduce drug prices by supporting efforts to give Medicare authority to negotiate with drug companies and to allow reimportation of safe, affordable prescription drugs from other countries. Unfortunately, the Republican leadership has blocked bipartisan efforts to lower drug prices, even though a reimportation bill passed the House by a vote of 243 to 186.

To assist seniors and individuals with disabilities, Bishop announced this week that he would be hosting five workshops to educate eligible individuals on the new prescription drug program. The workshops will be held at the following locations:

### **NOVEMBER 21, 2005**

KINGS PARK  
Kings Park Fire Department  
2 Main Street  
Kings Park, NY  
1:00 PM

HAMPTON BAYS  
Hampton Bays High School  
Argonne Road  
7:00 PM

### **NOVEMBER 22, 2005**

HOLBROOK  
Sachem Library, Room A  
150 Holbrook Road  
10:00 AM

MOUNT SINAI  
Mount Sinai High School  
150 North Country Road  
7:00 PM

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